

Welcome address at the Highway Africa - SABC Digital Journalism Awards evening

9 September 2008

Officials of media institutions, of national, continental and international media organisations, representatives and members of organisations and universities throughout Africa and other parts of the world, distinguished guests, academics and journalists, colleagues and compatriots: molweni, jambo, bonjour, boa noite, good evening.

It is a great pleasure on behalf Rhodes University and its School of Journalism and Media Studies to welcome you to the **Highway Africa - SABC Digital Journalism Awards** evening.

The School of Journalism and Media Studies occupies pride of place at Rhodes University and on the African continent and we are honoured to have once again hosted the 12th Highway Africa Conference and to be associated with this Awards evening.

The Highway Africa Conference is a key event of Rhodes University, and its Pan-African nature is congruent with our aspiration to be an outstanding African university 'Where Leaders Learn', a University 'which proudly affirms its African

identity', and which is rooted in the aspirations, challenges and struggles of the African continent.

Through hosting Highway Africa we seek to promote critical debate and dialogue among our continent's journalists on the urgent issues that face the media and journalism in Africa, in the context of the quest to advance social justice, democracy, and economic and social development on our continent.

It is, however, more than intellectual debate that we endeavour to foster. The myriad challenges of our continent also require our media and journalism and our universities to be catalysts of democratisation, development, social justice and the public good, and for unleashing the rich promise and potential of Africa and its diverse people.

And so Rhodes University and Highway Africa also seek to harness the collective wisdom of our intellectuals and journalists to develop creative and concrete solutions for the pressing historical and contemporary challenges of our continent.

In doing so, this is one of the means through which we as Rhodes University fulfil our commitment to serving South Africa and Africa as a place of knowledge and innovation, and excellence in teaching, research and community engagement.

This evening we acknowledge the outstanding contributions of professionals in the field of digital journalism. On behalf of Rhodes University, warm congratulations to the worthy recipients of the various Awards.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and compatriots

In the *Algebra of Infinite Justice*, Arundathi Roy writes that

the only dream worth having ...is to dream
that you will live while you're alive and only
die when you're dead.

This, she says, means

To love.

To never get used to the unspeakable violence
and vulgar disparity of life around you.

To respect strength, never power.

Above all, to watch.

To try and understand.

To never look away.

I hope that for the recipients of this evening's awards, and for journalists in general, these awards will be a spur:

- To boldly guard and promote the vital social purposes and roles of media and journalism
- To conscientiously practice and advance the professional obligations and public responsibilities that are attached to the practice of media and journalism
- To 'never look away', and to 'never get used to' impunity, oppression and injustice
- To never accommodate or respect naked power but instead speak with strength and courage truth to this power

A spur also

- To 'love' and 'understand' the rich diversity of the people who make up Africa and imbue it with great promise and potential, and
- To ensure that the people on our beautiful continent indeed "live while they're alive and only die when they're dead".

Enkosi, asanteni, merci, obrigado, thank you.